

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3587

ERIE RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR LORDVILLE, N. Y., ON

AUGUST 17, 1954

SUMMARY

Date: August 17, 1954

Railroad: Erie

Location: Lordville, N. Y.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Equipment involved: Freight train : Track motor-car
209

Train number: Extra 704 West :

Engine number: Diesel-electric :
units 704A,
704B, 704C,
and 704D

Consist: 97 cars, caboose :

Estimated speeds: Standing : 20 m. p. h.

Operation: Signal indications

Tracks: Double; 6°05' curve; 0.04 percent
ascending grade westward

Weather: Clear

Time: 3:10 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 6 injured

Cause: Failure to stop track motor-car
short of standing train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

ERIE RAILROAD COMPANY

September 22, 1954

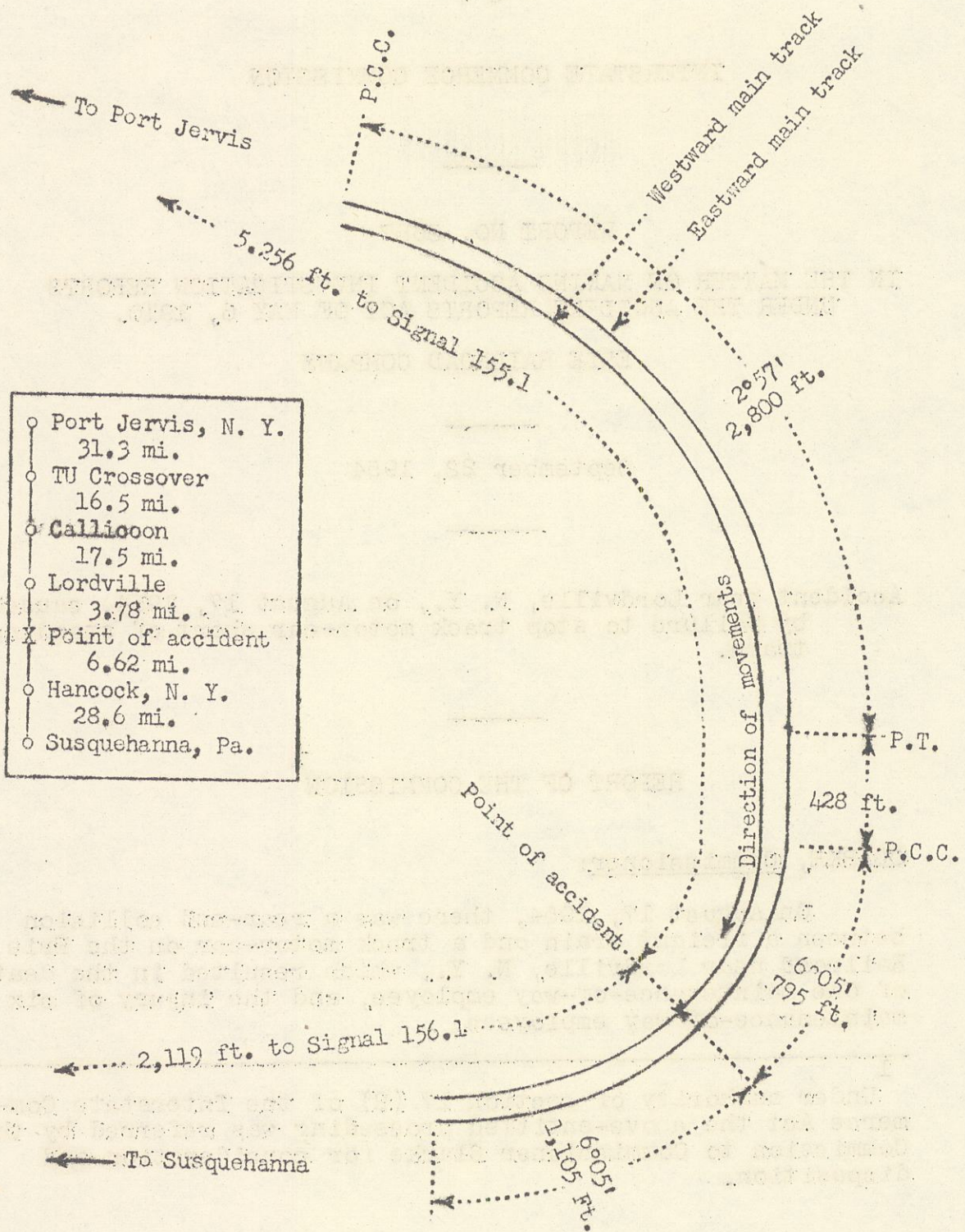
Accident near Lordville, N. Y., on August 17, 1954, caused
by failure to stop track motor-car short of standing
train.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On August 17, 1954, there was a rear-end collision between a freight train and a track motor-car on the Erie Railroad near Lordville, N. Y., which resulted in the death of one maintenance-of-way employee, and the injury of six maintenance-of-way employees.

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Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Clarke for consideration and disposition.



Report No. 3587
 Erie Railroad
 Lordville, N. Y.
 August 17, 1954

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Delaware Division extending between Port Jervis, N. Y., and Susquehanna, Pa., 104.3 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by signal indications supplemented by an intermittent inductive automatic train-stop system. The accident occurred on the westward main track at a point 69.08 miles west of Port Jervis and 3.78 miles west of the station at Lordville. From the east there are, in succession, a compound curve to the right, having a maximum curvature of $2^{\circ}57'$, 2,800 feet in length, a tangent 428 feet, and a compound curve to the right, having a maximum curvature of $6^{\circ}05'$, 795 feet to the point of accident and 1,105 feet westward. The grade for west-bound movements averages 0.04 percent ascending throughout a considerable distance on either side of the point of accident.

Automatic rail and flange oilers are located on the south rail of the westward main track at points 706 feet and 5.78 miles east of the point of accident and on the north rail at points 2.08 miles and 7.38 miles east of the point of accident. These devices are actuated by the wheels of passing equipment and apply measured amounts of lubricant automatically as each wheel passes over them.

Automatic signals 155.1 and 156.1, governing west-bound movements on the westward main track, are located 5,253 feet east and 2,119 feet west of the point of accident.

This carrier's rules governing the operation of track motor-cars read in part as follows:

770. * * *

* * *

(g) * * * The employe in charge must see that all occupants are properly placed, designating certain places for certain occupants with instructions that a constant lookout be kept in each direction. * * *

- (h) When employees operating cars have means of communication with dispatcher or operator, they must not proceed until the dispatcher has been informed of their movement and has furnished them in writing on the prescribed form, a line-up of trains and other equipment operating in the section in which the movement is to be made, but this will not relieve those in charge of cars from full responsibility of protecting them. * * *

* * *

- (n) Cars must not be attached to trains or engines and must not be run closer than eight hundred (800) feet behind moving trains, nor stopped within two hundred (200) feet of standing trains.

* * *

The maximum authorized speeds are 40 miles per hour for freight trains, 20 miles per hour for track motor-cars, and 15 miles per hour for track motor-cars when coupled with trailers.

Description of Accident

Extra 704 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 704A, 704B, 704C, and 704D, coupled in multiple-unit control, 97 cars, and a caboose. This train departed from Port Jervis at 1:20 p. m., and passed Callicoon, 21.28 miles east of the point of accident and the last open office, at 2:38 p. m. About 30 minutes later, while moving between signal locations on the westward main track at an estimated speed of 28 to 30 miles per hour the automatic train-stop device of the locomotive was actuated and the train was brought to a stop with the rear end at a point 3.78 miles west of the station at Lordville. The conductor said that it was 3 or 4 minutes later when the rear end was struck by track motor-car 209.

Track motor-car 209, occupied by a track foreman and 9 trackmen, and pulling a trailer occupied by an assistant track foreman and 19 trackmen, departed west-bound on the westward main track from a point 7.90 miles east of the point of accident about 2:50 p. m. At Lordville the employees who

had been riding on the trailer detached it from the track motor-car and removed it from the track. The assistant foreman and 19 trackmen remained at Lordville. Track motor-car 209 then proceeded westward, and while moving at a rate of speed variously estimated from 5 to 20 miles per hour it collided with the rear end of Extra 704 West.

Track motor-car 209 was considerably damaged.

One trackman who had been on the track motor-car was killed and six trackmen who had been on the track motor-car were injured, all of these casualties occurring when the men jumped off the motor car before the collision occurred.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:10 p. m.

Track motor-car 209 is of the chain-drive type and is powered by a 100-horsepower heavy-duty V-8 truck motor. It is equipped with four-wheel brakes, and an emergency brake is provided on the four-speed transmission. It weighs 2,200 pounds and is insulated to prevent the shunting of track circuits. Seating capacity for 10 persons is provided. It is equipped with a windshield and a metal top.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 22.3 trains.

Discussion

As Extra 704 West was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was 28 to 30 miles per hour, as estimated by the engineer. The engineer was maintaining a lookout ahead from his position in the control compartment at the front of the locomotive, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The other members of the crew were in various locations in the train. Signal 155.1 indicated Proceed. When the locomotive was approximately 500 feet east of signal 156.1, which indicated Proceed, the automatic train-stop device was actuated by some undetermined object or condition. The resultant service application of the brakes stopped the train with the front end of the locomotive a considerable distance west of the signal. Immediately after the train stopped the flagman alighted from the caboose and proceeded eastward to provide flag protection. When recalled by the engine-whistle signal he placed two torpedoes on the north rail and returned to the vicinity of the

caboose. He said that he had reached a point approximately 500 feet to the rear of the train before being recalled and that he had observed that there was a deposit of grease on the rails when he placed the torpedoes. The flagman was on the north side of the westward main track immediately to the rear of the caboose when he observed track motor-car 209 approaching. He immediately gave stop signals. He said that the torpedoes were exploded as the track motor-car approached, and that he thought the brakes of the car were applied. The conductor said that he observed the track motor-car approaching and he estimated that it was moving at a speed of 5 or 6 miles per hour. He said that because of its low speed he thought the track motor-car would be stopped short of the train. He estimated that the train had been stopped about 3 or 4 minutes at the time the collision occurred.

On the day of the accident a maintenance-of-way force was performing service on the track in the vicinity of a point 4.12 miles east of Lordville. Soon after 2:30 p. m. the track foreman instructed the assistant foreman to communicate by field telephone with the train dispatcher and obtain a line-up for the movement of track motor-car 209 to Hancock, 10.4 miles west of Lordville. At 2:40 p. m. the train dispatcher issued to the assistant foreman a line-up which contained the information that Extra 704 West had passed TU Crossover at 2:17 p. m. TU Crossover is 34.0 miles east of Lordville. After Extra 704 West passed, the track foreman instructed the members of the force to place track motor-car 209 and the trailer on the westward main track, and when this had been done the members of the force boarded the cars and the westward movement was begun.

The track foreman was operating the track motor-car. He said that the movement departed westward about 2:48 p. m., but the assistant foreman thought that the time of departure was between 2:50 and 2:55 p. m. At Lordville the movement was stopped while the trailer was detached. The track foreman said that west of Lordville the wheels of the track motor-car slipped at several points because of oil on the rails. He said that because of the difficulty in maintaining traction his attention was diverted to the operation of the car and he did not observe the aspect displayed by signal 155.1. He estimated that the maximum speed attained by the track motor-car between Lordville and the point of accident was about 25 miles per hour. Because of track curvature and vegetation adjacent to the right-of-way the view of the track ahead from the track motor-car approaching the point of accident was restricted to a

distance of approximately 600 feet. The track foreman said that when he observed the rear end of the train he immediately disengaged the gears and applied the brakes. Because of oil on the rails the wheels locked and slid. All members of the force except the track foreman alighted from the track motor-car before the collision occurred. The foreman said that the speed was reduced to about 5 miles per hour at the point of collision, and that if the wheels had not slid on the oil he could have stopped the track motor-car short of the train.

Laboratory analysis of the lubricant found on the rails in the vicinity of the point of accident disclosed that it was of the type used in the rail and flange oilers in this territory.

Extra 704 West passed Callicoon at 2:38 p. m. and was struck by the track motor-car approximately 32 minutes later at a point 21.28 miles west of Callicoon. A continuous movement throughout this distance during this period of time would require an average speed of 39.9 miles per hour. The track motor-car was restricted to a speed of 15 miles per hour while towing the trailer between the point at which it was placed on the track and Lordville, 4.12 miles, and a speed of 20 miles per hour between Lordville and the point of accident, 3.78 miles. If these speed restrictions had been observed the movement would have consumed more than 27 minutes. The track motor-car had been following the train a distance of 7.90 miles and from the fact that it overtook and collided with the train within the limits of time and distance here involved it is apparent that it was operated for at least a portion of the distance considerably in excess of the maximum authorized speed. The investigation disclosed that the trackmen jumped off from the motor car when it was only about two rail lengths from the rear of the standing train, and the casualties which resulted indicate that the speed must have been considerably higher than the estimates of the track foreman and the conductor. Two of the trackmen estimated the speed of the motor car at 18 or 20 miles per hour at the time they jumped off.

Cause

This accident was caused by failure to stop a track motor-car short of a standing train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-second day of September, 1954.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,

Secretary.